

S-2620
For DD/STK

5 February 1968

Record Deliveries Increase Congestion in Haiphong

Record deliveries to Haiphong in January and an apparent shortage of stevedores indicate that [port operations may be slowed and that] congestion may occur again in 1968 as it did in the spring and summer of 1967.

Record imports of more than 140,000 tons a month during March-June 1967 led to severe congestion in Haiphong, particularly during June and July. This congestion was reflected in increased layover times for ships calling at the port and accumulations of cargo in open storage near the wharves. Silting in the port and its approaches and the effects of US air strikes on stevedore availability and transportation of cargoes inland from the port aggravated the congestion but were not its major causes. Largely the result of a return of imports to lower and more normal levels, average layover times for departing ships dropped from the record high of 33 days in August to 15 days in December. This is only slightly above the monthly average for 1966 when congestion was still not a serious problem. This decrease in layover times occurred despite the destruction of all bridges linking Haiphong with the interior during airstrikes in September. The level of monthly imports, which was 77,000 tons in September, rose each month during October 1967 through January 1968. By December, it had reached 128,000 tons, close to the record levels that caused congestion earlier in the year; in January, deliveries reached 192,000 tons, a new record high. The availability of stevedores, already limited by frequent air raid alerts and by competing demands on North Vietnam's manpower, was reportedly insufficient to cope with the sharply increased cargoes. Some ships were delayed. Average layover times, which had been decreasing steadily were the same for ships departing in January as in

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December, but probably will increase in February. The record deliveries in January may not lead to congestion as serious as that of the worst months of 1967. The use of lighters and other craft in discharging cargoes and in moving them inland has increased greatly. This increase was facilitated by a significant expansion of North Vietnam's waterborne logistics fleet.

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